rise, and shine

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Wake up, sleepy head. There's— [Rebellion AU]

Rated: Fiction T - English - Madoka K., Homura A. - Words: 7,129 - Reviews: 6 - Favs: 6 - Follows: 2 - Published: 19h ago - Status: Complete - id: 10617912

She doesn't know why, but the thought of going to school—of leaving her house, seems to fill her with a sense of dread.

It's not that she dislikes school.

She knows she could be doing better in almost every subject, but school is where her friends are.

Notes passed during classes; lunchtime on the rooftops.

Just being surrounded by familiar faces, of hearing Saotome-sensei's daily tirades of her love life.

She enjoys it all.

And yet—

And yet—

Something about everything seems *off*. Something she can't remember.

Like a forgotten word on the tip of her tongue, constantly darting out of her grasp.

"Madoka, you should leave soon, or else you'll be late."

Her father's voice wakes her from her thoughts, and she glances up at the wall clock. Her eyes widen.

She quickly turns back to her meal.

With practiced ease, she finishes it all within a few forkfuls, leaving only the slice of bread layered with jam to take with her out the door.

She stands, a hand held out to Takkun. His small hand claps hers.

She pauses briefly, her eyes flickering down to Takkun's face.

His carefree smile is there—like she always remembers.

But—

"Madoka?" Her father once more.

Takkun giggles, his one hand now slapping the plate in front of him.

Like a conditioned reflex, she reaches out, body moving to catch something—

But she blinks, and whatever she had reached out for, is no longer there.

Her brow furrows as her head moves from side to side.

"Maroka?"

She glances down to Takkun's plate.

Eggs, and bread.

She sucks in a breath.

She could've sworn she had seen—

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The path to school is the same as always, and the halfway point is where she meets Sayaka and Hi—

Kyouko.

And more recently, Homura.

The new transfer student, who is also a magical girl.

One foot lifted, she pauses in her steps as she realizes—

Things had started feeling strange after Homura had arrived.

She stops walking.

Homu—

"Madoka! What are you doing, spacing out in the middle of the sidewalk?"

She blinks, and suddenly Sayaka is at her side, Kyouko on the other.

"S-Sayaka-chan!"

Sayaka raises an eyebrow. "Hey, you don't have to sound so surprised to see me! It's not like we don't walk to school together every day...?"

She hears Kyouko laugh in response, and there's a small blush that dusts her cheeks.

"S-Sorry, Sayaka-chan. I didn't—I mean, that's—"

An arm slips around her shoulders, and she finds herself being lead down the street as Sayaka sets the pace.

"Don't tell me you're still sleeping! Though I don't really blame you. Yesterday's fight was pretty tiring. We got back so late I didn't even get to finish my homework."

Madoka frowns. "You didn't do your homework before? You know there's always a chance we'll get called out in the middle of the night; it's why Mami-san always insists we go home for dinner."

Kyouko leans forward. "We were kind of busy." When Madoka turns to her, Kyouko puts on her best puppy dog eyes. "...so, can I see your homework, Madoka?"

"Uhm..." She tries to resist, but caves in when she sees a pout join those wide crimson eyes. "O-Okay, I guess...?"

Kyouko grins. "Thanks!"

"But!" She holds up a finger. "This time you have to at least make sure to change some of the wording!"

Kyouko nods. "Sure, no problem."

Madoka looks at her doubtfully.

"Uh... would it be alright if I copied too, Madoka?"

She turns to Sayaka. "Uhm..."

"Hey, isn't that Homura up ahead?" Kyouko asks.

Sure enough, the new addition to their team is walking slowly, and even from here, they can tell she has her head bowed, eyes no doubt concentrated on the floor to avoid any possible eye contact.

Kyouko points. "Why don't you ask Homura. She seems smart."

Sayaka has a hand on her chin; she doesn't care who she copies off of, as long as the answers are correct.

They easily catch up to the distracted girl.

"Homura-chan, good morning!" Madoka calls out.

As expected, Homura jumps. She whirls around, hand readjusting her glasses as she peers timidly at Madoka.

"K-Kaname-san. G-Good morning." Her lavender eyes flicker over to Kyouko, and then to Sayaka. "Miki-san. Sakura-san," she murmurs.

Madoka smiles kindly, and gently removes herself from Sayaka's grasp. "How are you today, Homura-chan? Yesterday's fight was pretty tough, huh?"

She falls into step with the other girl, leaving Sayaka to walk with Kyouko.

Kyouko elbows Sayaka. "Hey, weren't you going to see if you could copy Homura's homework?"

"Ahh." Blue eyes light up as a devious smirk appears on her face.

Chatting with Madoka, Homura doesn't notice the approaching figure behind her. There's a sudden puff of breath against her ear, resulting in a high pitched squeak.

She turns around, one hand covering her ear, surprised tears gathered at the corners of her eyes.

Sayaka laughs, Kyouko echoing her.

Madoka places her hands on her hips. "Sayaka-chan!"

Sayaka is leaning against Kyouko as she holds her stomach. "You should've seen your face, Homura! And what was that cute squeak?"

Homura blushes, and hunches in her shoulders, trying to appear smaller.

Madoka frowns in response. "Just for that, I'm not letting you copy my homework." She reaches over, her arm looping around Homura's. "And neither is Homura-chan."

The laugh dies in Kyouko's throat. "W-Wait!"

"K-Kaname-san...?"

"Let's go, Homura-chan." Without waiting for her to reply, Madoka drags her away.

Kyouko whirls on Sayaka, and punches her in the arm. "Nice going, idiot!" She chases after them: she's going to get detention if she doesn't turn in her homework today.

Sayaka remains in place, rubbing her arm.

Until she realizes that she's being left behind—and quickly follows.

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The familiar feel of wind against her face.

She smiles, and turns to Homura. "Homura-chan, would you like a piece of karaage?"

Those timid lavender eyes look to her. "U-Uhm..."

"I'll take it if you don't want it," Kyouko cuts in, snapping her chopsticks with a small click.

"That is bad manners, Sakura-san," Mami scolds. "And if you're going to take something from Kaname-san's bentou, you'll need to replace it with something from yours. Otherwise she's going to have nothing to eat."

Madoka gives Homura another smile. "Here you go, Homura-chan! My Papa makes the best karaage; please try some!"

Before she can protest, there's a piece slipped into her simple bentou.

"T-Thank you, Kaname-san," Homura murmurs. "U-Uhm." She glances down, and then back up. "Y-You can have some of my katsu, Kaname-san...?"

Kyouko opens her mouth, but Sayaka reaches over to slap her on the head. "Just eat your own bentou already."

Kyouko sticks out tongue, and Sayaka winces when she sees pieces of chewed food stuck on it.

Mami beats her to the punch. "Sakura-san."

Slice of katsu now joining the rest of her lunch, Madoka takes a seat next to Homura.

"How is it?" she asks, noticing the other girl taking a bite of the karaage.

Hand covering her mouth, Homura chews politely. "I-It's really good, Kaname-san."

Madoka grins, and turns to her own food.

"I-It's strange though, Kaname-san..."

"Hm?"

Homura is staring at her bentou, an absent expression on her face. "T-The taste... it's... almost nostalgic. Like I have eaten it before...?"

Madoka blinks. "Uhm... like at a restaurant, or something...?"

Homura turns to her, lips slightly tugged down. "N-No. Almost like—"

Kyouko suddenly crashes into her, and Homura finds half her lunch on the floor, and half her body in Madoka's lap.

"Whoops, sorry!"

"Kyouko-chan!" Madoka had barely managed to save her own lunch and Homura at the same time.

"S-Sorry, Kaname-san." Homura blushes as she moves back to her seat.

"Ah!" Madoka immediately notices the spilled food. "Kyouko-chan!"

Homura jumps when Kyouko is once again next to her, staring at the rice on the floor.

Mami clears her throat. "Don't even think about it, Sakura-san."

Kyouko hangs her head, and Homura glances to Madoka in confusion.

"You don't want to know," she replies. She turns to Kyouko. "But now what will Homura-chan eat?"

Homura shakes her head. "N-No, th-that's okay. I—"

Kyouko grabs her hands with tears in her eyes. "Sorry, Homura! I'll buy you some bread!"

"U-Uhm—"

Kyouko whirls around. "Sayaka! Lend me some money!"

Sayaka rolls her eyes. "Why am I not surprised?"

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Sunset.

Rolling hills.

The view of Mitakihara.

The feel of Homura's hand in hers.

With a smile, Madoka turns, only to find Homura smiling at her; maybe she's thinking the same thing.

She glances down, and her smile wavers.

She's still holding onto a hand—but—

Something tightens against her chest.

Flesh is replaced with bone, and those bony fingers suddenly tighten their hold on hers.

"Kaname-san?"

Her head snaps up.

Homura is peering at her, worry visible in her furrowed brow.

"Are you alright?"

She swallows, and she glances down once more.

Homura's hand is back to normal, and suddenly pulling away.

"I-I'm sorry." Homura looks embarrassed.

She snatches Homura's hand back.

"K-Kaname-san…?"

She finally looks up, and gives Homura a smile, before she turns to Mami. "You know what sounds really good right now, Mami-san?"

Mami closes her eyes, a gentle smile playing across her lips. "What does, Kaname-san?"

She grins. "Some of that tea you prepared yesterday. It was really good!"

Kyouko pumps her fist into the air. "And you know what goes good with tea?"

"'Goes well,'" Sayaka cuts in, correcting her.

It earns her another tongue stuck out in response.

Mami taps a finger on her chin. "Mm... well, I do have cake leftover from yesterday, and I'm always more than glad to make tea for my cute kouhai."

Kyouko doesn't need to be told twice. "Let's go. I'm starving!"

Mami sighs, but she starts leading the way to her apartment.

Madoka glances to Homura, before she gives her a smile, and tugs her along.

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A field of flowers.

City lights blink in the distance, but all she notices is the girl sitting next to her.

"You know, Homura-chan," she turns to face Homura, "for some reason, it feels like I have been waiting a long time to just sit and chat with you."

Homura smiles—and she feels a pang in her chest as it's maybe the first time she has seen Homura look so happy.

"Me too, Kaname-san. I-It feels... like I've been waiting all my life to meet you..."

She feels her face grow warm at Homura's words. A shy smile on her lips, she closes her eyes. She slowly inches her hand forward, and

when it contacts with Homura's, she's not surprised when the other girl jumps.

"...Can I hold your hand, Homura-chan?"

It's a sudden urge, and she quickly banishes the thought of what she had seen a few days back.

"...O-Okay."

She opens her eyes, watching with slight amusement when she notices that the colour lining Homura's face matches her pink hair.

Somehow, even with her stuttering and mumbling, their fingers are once again intertwined.

Madoka sighs, content with the warmth in her hand.

"Kaname-san...?"

"Hm?"

"If... if this..."

She turns to look at her. "Homura-chan?"

Homura is avoiding her gaze. "...If this," she gestures, "is all a dream, what would you do?"

Her words catch her off guard. "A dream...?"

Homura suddenly holds her hand tighter. "I'm happy that I moved here, to Mitakihara, Kaname-san. I'm glad I met you."

She realizes that Homura is crying when something wet hits her hand. "Homura-chan?"

Homura lets go, and uses the back of her hand to wipe her eyes as the other lifts her glasses. "I-I'm sorry, I'm not sure what's gotten into me..."

Madoka reaches over, her fingers brushing against Homura's hand. "...This isn't a dream, Homura-chan. It's—"

She pushes away her doubts.

"It's real. You're here. I'm here." She smiles. "We're both here."

Homura bows her head. She shyly looks over, only to find Madoka still smiling.

Somehow, their hands connect once more.

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The alarm clock is shut off, before she rolls out of bed.

Bare feet lead her towards the living room, where she makes her way to the patio door.

She sees her father outside, kneeling, tending to the garden.

"Morning Papa!" she calls out.

"Morning, Madoka."

"Where's Mama?"

"Still sleeping. I already sent Takkun to wake her; you should go help him."

"Okayyy."

Though she agrees, it takes her a minute longer until she finally moves from her spot.

The vegetable garden that she knows—is barren and dry.

And not once had her Papa turned around to greet her.

She swallows heavily, and makes her way to her mom's room.

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Toothbrush in hand, she's watching her mother's reflection, while at the same time trying to not be too obvious.

It doesn't work.

Her mother turns to her. "What's wrong, Madoka? Are you having love troubles in school?" she teases.

She can't help it—she blushes.

She shakes her head. "N-No! I don't have anyone like that, Mama!"

Her mother grins, and turns back to applying her make-up. "Well, then what seems to be the problem, hm? That you seem so fixated on my beautiful face?"

Her eyes flicker over to her Mama. "Mama... D-Do you ever get the feeling that... something feels wrong...?"

The grin disappears. "What do you mean, Madoka?"

She glances down to the floor. "I... I don't know," she says, voice small.

An arm loops around her shoulders, and she's engulfed in a familiar scent of perfume, make-up, and the warmth of her mother's embrace.

"Well, whatever it is, it'll be okay, alright? Mama's here for you."

She closes her eyes.

She wants to believe in those words.

And yet—

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Gym.

High jump.

When it's her turn, she walks towards the line.

One arm raised. "Kaname Madoka, taking her turn now."

A whistle blows, and she takes a deep breath to calm her nerves.

A light jog, and a burst of magic is added right before she makes the jump.

She clears the height easily, and hears claps as she lands safely on the rubber mat, rolling from her back, onto to her knees.

It's cheating, but—

As she walks back to join the rest of the class, she hears the teacher call out Homura's name.

She watches as Homura timidly approaches the line.

"A-Akemi Homura," her voice is a quiet whisper, "taking her turn now..."

The whistle blows just as Madoka takes her seat.

She winces right when Homura is about to jump, and instead her foot somehow twists underneath her. The momentum sends her forward, and she lands on the track floor with a cloud of dust.

Madoka's on her feet in another second.

She's the health officer—but more than that, she's Homura's friend, and she's looping an arm around that thin waist, helping her to the nurse's a moment later.

"K-Kaname-san...? I'm, alright..." Homura whispers. "I-It just surprised me, that's all."

Madoka turns to her. Her eyes trail down Homura's body, to the pair of scraped knees, and the other girl reacts by trying to pull away.

"K-Kaname-san?"

She drags Homura to the bathroom instead. Once she makes sure that there's no one inside, she claims a stall and locks the door behind them.

Homura looks almost panicked, but she merely smiles.

A confused tilt of her head, and Madoka holds out her hand in reply. Her soul gem is suddenly in her open palm.

It dawns on Homura what she's doing. "O-Oh! R-Right, I forgot all about. I can just—"

Madoka steps forward, causing Homura to step back. She's glad that they have Western styled toilets here—because she's pretty sure Homura would've tripped into the more traditional ones.

"It's fine, Homura-chan. I learned how to heal more efficiently from Sayaka-chan." She lifts her chin.

Homura glances away, before her eyes finally return to hers. "O-Okay," she murmurs.

She nods. It's a simple process, and she places her soul gem next to Homura's injuries. A soft glow, and she slowly works her magic to healing skin and tissue.

When she sees Homura staring at her in wonder, an almost proud smile flits onto her lips. "See?"

Homura bobs her head. "T-Thank you, Kaname-san."

"You're welcome, Homura-chan." She eyes Homura carefully. "...where else?"

Homura jumps. "E-Eh?"

"You landed on your wrist."

A telltale flinch has Madoka sighing.

"Give me your arm, Homura-chan."

"T-That's okay, K-Kaname-san!" Homura squeaks out.

She channels in her inner 'Junko' and a few moments later, Homura is holding up her arm as she keeps her eyes on the ground.

She can already see a bruise forming; she heals it easily, and as soon as she's done, Homura pulls away faster than she can blink.

She's about to say something, but they both freeze when they hear the door open.

A finger pressed to her lips, and Homura nods in response.

Luckily, no one comes in after that person leaves, and they quickly decide that they should do the same.

They still need to head to the nurse's office though, to at least get a note and maybe some bandaids, and Madoka leads the way with a shy Homura trailing after.

A left at the corner, down another hallway.

A right, and suddenly they're standing in that overpass that connects to the admin building.

They continue on their way, and Madoka can't help but glance outside.

Her steps falter; it's not the school she sees.

"Kaname-san...?"

That familiar voice jolts her from her thoughts. She turns to find Homura staring at her in worry.

"A-Are you alright?"

Her throat feels dry. "H-Homura-chan?"

"Yes, Kaname-san?"

She licks her lips, noting absently that they're a bit chapped. "...After school, would it be alright if you come with me for a bit?"

She sees Homura's eyebrows raise in slight surprise. "U-Uhm... T-That's fine, if you're okay with me...?"

Her eyes flicker over to the windows. "...I just... really need to talk to someone right now."

"T-That's fine, Kaname-san..." Homura once again gives her a timid look. "B-But, are you sure you want to talk to me? W-Wouldn't Tomoe-san, or Miki—"

She steps forward, and Homura barely manages to stifle her squeak as she grabs her hand. "Homura-chan, please stop talking about yourself like that, okay? I asked you, because I want to talk with you, Homura-chan."

Homura's pale complexion gives everything away—and the process of her face turning an adoring red is visible to her eyes.

"O-Okay," Homura mumbles.

She nods, and without dropping Homura's hand, she starts leading her towards their original destination.

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A small lie as she tells Sayaka she has to go home right after school, while Homura stutters out an excuse of having to go to the doctor's for a check-up.

They take separate paths, and meet up at the small park a few streets away from the mall.

Despite her urgency, she feels her stomach growl when they pass a crepe cart, and it isn't too hard to convince Homura to split one with her.

They settle into one of the empty benches nearby, and after a few bites, she hands the crepe over.

She leans back, and briefly takes a moment to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere.

When she glances to the other girl, her lips twitch in amusement as she spots a bit of creme on her cheek.

"Homura-chan?"

Said girl looks up, just as Madoka leans forward, handkerchief in hand.

"K-Kaname-san...?"

One hand now on Homura's chin, she turns her face as she uses the cloth to dab at the creme.

Homura is completely frozen under her touch, and once she makes sure she hasn't missed anything, she pulls away.

"You had some creme on your face," she explains.

As expected, Homura blushes. She quickly averts her eyes. "T-Thank you, Kaname-san..."

She nods, and pockets her handkerchief.

Homura slowly lowers the crepe. "Kaname-san?"

"Hm...?"

"Uhm. T-That is... w-what did you want to talk about?"

She's staring off to the side, where she has noticed strange flashes of white out of the corner of her eyes.

Her head turns when she see another one, but whatever it was, is now gone.

There's a sudden surge of frustration.

She faces Homura, who's watching her.

She takes a breath. "Homura-chan... do you sometimes get the feeling that something is wrong...?"

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She's finishing the rest of the crepe as Homura processes her words.

The last bite disappears into her mouth, and she crumples up the wrapper as she chews.

She sees Homura glance over, and waits patiently for her input.

"...I'm, not sure what you want me to say, Kaname-san," Homura murmurs.

She avoids looking at her. "...Do you believe me, at least? Or—" she swallows heavily, "or am I crazy?" she whispers.

To her surprise, there's a hand covering hers. "I don't think you're crazy, Kaname-san. If you believe that is what you're seeing, then that is what you're seeing."

Her words make it easier to swallow that lump in her throat. "W-Why do you believe me?"

She takes the chance to finally look over, only to find a small smile on Homura's face.

"...We're magical girls, Kaname-san. Anything is possible."

Something prickles in her eyes at the immense relief at having—someone—*Homura*—believing her.

As if sensing her earlier anguish, Homura awkwardly pats her hand.

She has always preferred physical contact for comfort, and she leans closer to Homura, her hands snaking around her thin body.

Homura stiffens, but eventually relaxes as she continues to hug her.

Her hands press into Homura's back; she's solid.

"K-Kaname-san...?"

She reluctantly pulls away. "Thank you, Homura-chan," she murmurs.

Homura shakes her head. "N-No. It's..." She blushes. ""A-Are you alright now?"

She nods, and settles for leaning against Homura instead. "Yes. Thank you."

She feels Homura shift, most likely to get a bit more comfortable.

"...What do you plan to do now, Kaname-san?"

"Do?" she echoes.

Homura nods. "Y-Yes? There's... there has to be a reason why everything is... why some things aren't as they appear to be."

She frowns. She hadn't thought of the after.

"M-Maybe, we should first see if it's really only something you can see," Homura suggests.

She glances over. "How would we do that?"

"Mm..." Homura shifts once more in her seat. "Uhm... I guess... if you see something strange, you could, uhm... p-point it out, and I could see if I see it too...?"

She blinks.

Homura ducks her head. "I mean—it, well, t-that's just a suggestion, i-if you have a better—"

This time, she pats Homura's hand. "That's better than what I could think of, Homura-chan. Let's try it."

Lavender flickers over to her, before she sees Homura nod timidly.

"O-Okay."

Still leaning against Homura, she waits for whatever to happen.

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It shouldn't be making her feel better, but it does.

Homura is shaking next to her, and they both realize that she can also see the same things—as long as Madoka tells her first.

What it means though, she has no idea.

Homura turns, and suddenly grips Madoka's hand. "C-Can we stop now, Kaname-san...?"

She nods.

She leans heavily against Homura, exhaustion overcoming her body. "...I feel really tired all of a sudden."

Homura glances to her in worry. "U-Uhm." She looks around, and Madoka rouses from her sleepiness as she feels Homura start to stand.

"Homura-chan?"

"I-I'll get you something to drink, Kaname-san. Just wait—"

She pulls her back onto the bench. "...Please don't leave," she pleads almost desperately.

Homura immediately settles back into her seat. "I-I won't leave you, Kaname-san."

She closes her eyes, resting her head against Homura's shoulder. "Thank you."

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Homura eventually does have to leave though.

She feels guilty for making her walk her back home, but it was comforting to have the other girl by her side.

"Thank you, Homura-chan," she murmurs, reaching over for a hug.

A small squeak, and she waits until Homura finally relaxes to return the hug, before she pulls away.

She glances at her nervously. "Will you be alright?"

Homura shuffles her feet, hands fidgeting with her bag. "Y-Yes." She takes in a deep breath, puffing up her chest. "I'll be okay."

If she wasn't so tired, so would've thought the sight absolutely adorable.

She at least manages a smile, and after squeezing Homura's hand in encouragement, they both bid their goodbyes.

"Text me when you get home," she reminds her.

Homura nods. "Y-Yes, of course, Kaname-san. Feel better."

Another smile, before Homura starts walking away.

She watches until she can no longer see her.

A small sigh, and she heads inside.

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She doesn't feel better even after sleeping, and spends the next day in bed.

She pretends to be napping when she hears the knock on her door, and waits until her Papa leaves to see what he brought in.

Sandwiches, and a bowl of soup.

Her stomach growls at the sight, and she digs in.

It isn't until she's halfway through that she realizes he most likely knew she was awake.

She eats slower, and suddenly finds the food harder to swallow.

If Papa isn't Papa, then who, or what, is he?

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She spends the next few days away from school, hiding inside her room.

She messages Homura constantly, and there's a smile of amusement when the other girl's awkwardness somehow carries over in text; correct punctuation, and her polite way of replying reminds her that Homura most likely isn't used to chatting this way with friends.

Mami, Sayaka, and Hitomi also message her, and the thought of her friends missing her at least keeps her hanging on.

Staying at home, she realizes that her Papa is like a waif in the house; she knows he's there, and he only appears by coincidence, like when she's hungry for lunch, or wanting a snack, or wondering where he is.

Takkun comes and goes; a familiar laugh that haunts her at corners.

And Mama...

Maybe because she's closest to Mama, she's the most solid of them all.

And yet—

She tugs her blankets over her head. Her phone is cradled in her hands, and she waits for Homura to reply.

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The fourth day of her absence, and suddenly there's a knock on her door.

She's in a strange daze, and jumps from the sound.

The door opens just as she emerges from her blankets, hair a mess and pajamas astray.

"You're looking awfully lazy, Madoka!" Sayaka cheerfully greets her.

She brightens immediately, tears pooling in her eyes. "Sayaka-chan!"

Sayaka enters, and the other three behind her follow her inside.

"Yo." Kyouko holds up a hand in greeting.

"Kaname-san, I hope we're not intruding," Mami politely says.

Homura quietly trails after them.

"Kyouko-chan! Mami-san!" She smiles to each of them. "Homura—"

Homura shyly stares at the floor, hands twisting the bag in her hands. "K-Kaname-san..."

She's frozen in place.

Gone, are her red framed glasses. Gone, are the braids in her hair.

Sayaka clears her throat. "Ahem, well, there's a good explanation for this." She gestures to Homura. "So, we were discussing cheesecake,

and one thing lead to another, and I had this strange urge to see Homura with her hair down."

Kyouko leans forward with a whistle. "Yeah, and who knew behind those dorky glasses of hers, there lies a real diamond in the rough."

Homura blushes, eyes still staring at the floor.

Mami smiles. "A simple makeover, yet the effect during school was very dramatic, or so Miki-san tells me."

Sayaka grins. "Yeah, you should've seen it! All the boys were falling over themselves—and suddenly everyone wanted to be Homura's best friend!"

She still hasn't replied.

Homura's hand moves to readjust her glasses—and it isn't until she grasps air that she realizes they're no longer sitting on her face.

Kyouko snorts in amusement, and that seems to break whatever trance Madoka's in.

"Ah..." She eyes Homura up and down. "Y-You look really nice, Homura-chan..."

Homura hunches over self-consciously.

Sayaka clears her throat again. "Anyways, we just wanted to see how you're doing, Madoka. We heard what happened from Homura."

Her head snaps up. "W-What?" Her eyes dart nervously to Homura who's shaking her head.

"She said you weren't feeling too well the other day, and messaged her about it."

"O-Oh." Relief floods her system, and she gives Homura an apologetic glance.

Sayaka stares at them suspiciously. "So... how are you doing, Madoka?"

"Uhm." She glances away. "A-Alright, I guess. P-Papa took my temperature, but I don't have a fever or anything." She shrugs helplessly. "I just—feel really tired lately...?"

A pause, and suddenly she feels a hand on her head.

"You know you can tell me anything, right?" Sayaka tells her softly.

"Sayaka-chan..."

"The same goes for any of us, Kaname-san," Mami adds in.

"Yeah," Kyouko grunts out, trying to sound gruff despite the small blush on her cheeks.

She smiles—the first time in days. "T-Thank you, everyone. I-I'm..." she looks to each of them. "...I'm okay. I feel better, already."

Sayaka grins mischievously. Before Madoka can stop her, two hands are ruffling her already messy hair.

"S-Sayaka-chan!" She bats those hands away, and quickly tries to salvage whatever dignity she has left by fixing her hair.

"Anyways, we have to get going now." Sayaka's words has her mood plummeting. "You need to rest, and we need to patrol..."

"Ah..." She understands, but—

Sayaka suddenly grabs Homura and pushes her towards the bed. "Homura took notes for you though. So she'll at least keep you company."

"E-Eh?"

Two waves, and a polite bow later, it's only the two of them remaining.

Despite her new look, Homura is just as shy. She spends a few moments staring at the ground, fidgeting nervously as she waits for Madoka to say something first.

"Homura-chan?"

She jumps. "Y-Yes?"

"Uhm... you had notes for me?"

Her words sends Homura moving, and she waits patiently as the other girl starts digging through her book bag.

She watches as she pulls out two notebooks, eyes darting between them, as if trying to decide which to start with first.

"Homura-chan...?"

The purple one is slipped back into her bag, before Homura holds out the small pink one. "Uhm, I tried to write as neatly as possible..."

She accepts it, and flips it open as soon as it's in her hands. "Ahh..." Just the sight of formulas and math makes her head spin.

"Uhm!"

She glances up.

Homura is once against fidgeting with her bag. "I-I can teach you, uhm, anything you don't understand, Kaname-san. I-It's... It's a subject I'm familiar with..."

Anything is better than thinking about the last few days, and she replies by patting the spot next to her on her bed.

Homura glances at her nervously, and after another encouraging nod, she slowly moves over.

"Uhm, it's—"

She pulls her down. "Make yourself comfortable, Homura-chan. I think..." she looks down at the notes, "...this might take a while...?"

"Ah..." Lavender flickers over to her briefly. "O-Okay, Kaname-san..."

/

"...Thank you, Papa," she murmurs.

"You're welcome, Madoka. Tell me if you girls need anything else."

"Okay."

With a small click, the door shuts.

Homura is still staring at it when Madoka turns to her. "Homura-chan?"

She jumps. "Y-Yes?"

"Papa..."

Homura reaches over and shuts the notebook they had been pouring over for a while now. "A-Actually, Kaname-san, I have... uhm, some other notes that I took these past few days..."

She looks up in curiosity. "Other notes?"

Homura nods, even as she remains concentrated on her bag.

A second later, that purple notebook is pulled out once more.

"Uhm... it's..." Homura hesitates briefly, before she hands it over.

She accepts this one as well, hands already moving to flip it open.

Numbers, and words greet her, and it takes her a moment until she understands what she's seeing.

Her lips part, and her eyes widen in surprise.

"I just—thought it'd be good to uhm, document when things started... b-blurring, I guess...?" Homura explains quietly.

Each line is written with a date, time, and a brief description of things Homura had 'seen.'

She glances over to the other girl, different emotions hitting her at the same time.

Not once had Homura ever doubted her words; the thought makes her heart clench, and she suddenly realizes that she's crying.

"K-Kaname-san?!"

Homura—really is a great friend.

Maybe—one of the best friends she has ever had.

\\

Once she calms down, as per Homura's encouragement, she starts filling in her own notebook.

Papa, Takkun.

The garden outside.

School.

Every little thing she remembers is written down, and her hand is cramping when she finally hits the end of her memories.

Her eyes stare at the pages as she tries to find a clue—something that ties them—everything, together.

Homura has been quiet, and she realizes she has all but forgotten she's there.

She glances over, only to find Homura staring distractedly at the side.

"Homura-chan?"

Lavender flickers over to look at her. "Hm...?"

"Uhm. I'm done..." She gestures to the notebook.

Homura sits up, hands smoothing the front of her skirt.

There's—something off about Homura. "Homura-chan...?"

She feels her heart pounding in her chest; if Homura isn't real as well, she doesn't know what she's going to do.

Homura gently takes the notebook from her hands, and turns her attention to the written words.

She watches as her eyes trail down the pages, hands flipping the pages once that section is done.

Once she reaches the end, Homura finally glances up.

Madoka flinches, and quickly averts her gaze. "Homura-chan...?"

"Kaname-san." Her voice is quiet. "Do you... see a pattern, in the things you see...?"

Her brow furrows, and she goes through her notes. "N-No. Not really..."

Homura leans forward slightly, and reaches for her own notebook. "How about... the things that I see?"

She blinks. She goes through Homura's notes, and when she's done, she finds Homura staring at the floor.

"Kaname-san?"

It's suddenly—very hard to breath. "H-Homura-chan?"

"...Everything is tied to you, Kaname-san," Homura murmurs. Madoka suddenly looks up, and lavender locks with pink. "Kaname-san... do you remember, what I asked you a few weeks back?"

"E-Eh?"

Homura closes her eyes. "'If this all is a dream, what would you do?'"

Her stomach drops as a chill runs down her spine. "H-Homura-chan...?"

One by one, the things surrounding them slowly fade away.

Her room, her bed.

Until all that's left is her, sitting on darkness with Homura nearby.

"W-What is—What...?"

Homura opens her eyes, and gives her a sad smile. "Once upon a time, there was a lonely, selfish girl, who made a wish to save her best friend. No matter what happened, she vowed to save her. She tried,

over, and over, and over again. But in the end, all her efforts were futile, and her best friend disappeared."

She notices that Homura is crying.

"With only two red ribbons in her hands to keep her company, she was all alone once more. No one else remembered the kind girl who gave up everything, and the selfish girl—needed some kind of confirmation. S-She made a mistake, and she did something she shouldn't have done."

"Homura-chan...?"

"...But by then, it was already too late. By the time she realized what was about to happen, the girl she vowed to save, was already held captive."

She reaches for Homura's hand, and she's surprised when it's solid.

Homura glances over to her. "...You're dreaming, Madoka."

Her head suddenly throbs, and she grasps at it painfully. "N-No... N-No!"

Homura watches as her eyes slowly transition from their usually rose pink, to golden yellow.

"I-I'm not—I was—H-How!"

Homura grips her hand tightly. "...I'm sorry. It was my fault. I couldn't save you."

She's sobbing on the floor. "N-No...NO! I-I wished... t-to... H-How...?"

Homura reaches over, and gathers her in her arms. "I realized it... when you were absent, everything, other than you, was hazy," she says softly. "I couldn't—remember how I arrived home, but I remember messaging you, telling you that I had arrived. The only things that were clear, were things associated with you..."

"N-No... no... no..."

Homura holds her close. "...I'm dreaming too, Madoka."

"W-What?" she croaks out.

"T-They used me, to get to you… My dream, is really similar to yours."

"H-Homura-chan…?"

"We're connected, you know? My wish… and your wish… I'm… the Homura that remembers you. The real me, she's… dreaming, with the Madoka over there."

Homura gently pulls away, only to brush the tears from Madoka's cheeks.

"…The real Homura… isn't doing too well though," she murmurs softly. A self-deprecating smile flutters onto her lips. "She… took a small portion of your power, and she's…" She shakes her head. "Corruption from the despair forced on her soul gem, combined with powers that a human wouldn't be able to handle…"

"H-Homura-chan…?"

A gentle smile on Homura's face, before she holds Madoka close once more. "Madoka… you're strong. Never doubt that. This small part of me, will always be connected with you. No matter what it takes, I will definitely protect you. We'll… We'll break out of this, together. And, if… if you see the other me, someday, don't… don't be too hard on her, alright? She's… she's… just a bit lost, at the moment."

"Homura-chan…?"

"…You're waking up now, Madoka."

Like shattered glass, cracks appear around them, and suddenly Homura is no more.

"Homura-chan!?"

She whirls around, searching for a sign that Homura is still there.

"Homura-chan—"

Her eyes snap open as she gasps.

She tries to look around—but there's something holding her head in place.

Struggles with her arm and leg yield the same results.

/You are awake once more, Kaname Madoka/

She feels her blood run cold. "Incubator."

/Each cycle, it seems you dream less and less. Why do you remain so stubborn? This is the original purpose that soul gems were made for/

She grits her teeth. "Y-You! Let me go!"

/You know that our objective is to counter entropy. Harnessing Witches are far more efficient than the slow process of harvesting grief cubes. We are only doing this because your wish changed our original plans. If you hadn't tried to intervene, we wouldn't have needed to capture you/

Her eyes glow, and she feels her hands lifting as she pulls against whatever is holding her in place.

/You are rather stubborn, just like Akemi Homura. She refuses to relinquish the small part of you that she has stolen, making it difficult for us to use you to your full extent/

She feels her binds breaking—and there's a brief moment of hope—that disappears as pain runs through her body.

She screams, thoughts wishing—hoping that whatever it is, will stop.

/Sleep well, Kaname Madoka/

Her eyesight blurs, and she sees a flash of white, before everything disappears.

/

Ribbons in hand, she stares at her mother's reflection.

"So, what else is new, Madoka?"

"Mm." She thinks briefly. "T-There's a new transfer student coming in today, Mama."

"Oh? During this time? That's really rare."

She nods. "But... uhm." She tilts her head. "I hope I can get along with her."

Her mother grins, looping an arm around her shoulders. "I think you'll do fine, Madoka." She points to Madoka's right hand. "Red, by the way."

"Ehh? Isn't it kind of... flashy?"

Her mother smiles. "It's perfect. All your secret fans will see it, and be head over heels for you."

"I don't have any of those, Mama!"

A laugh in response. "Sure you do, Madoka. Everyone has one. Even if it's only in your mind." She winks.

A moment later, those red ribbons are in her hair, and her mother grins.

"See? Perfect."

She watches as her mother leaves the bathroom.

One more glance into the mirror, before she follows right afte**r.**

AN: Rebellion, yet not Rebellion, was my thought process to writing this story.